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### **Savoie Presents Higher Education Budget Request**

**BATON ROUGE:** Pointing to the vital connection between education and economic development, Commissioner of Higher Education Joe Savoie appeared before the House Appropriations Committee today thanking legislators for their past support and seeking their assistance to "maintain the momentum in education reform."

"The truth of the matter is that Louisiana is experiencing a success stories within our colleges and universities. These institutions are very important to the economic and social vitality of our state. If we don't follow through on these efforts our legacy in education may not be one of realized excellence but instead may be one of unfulfilled potential," said Savoie.

During his full morning of testimony, Commissioner Savoie highlighted numerous accountability measures that are leading to outstanding results in key quality indicators. They include an increase in student ACT scores, student passage rates, program accreditation rates, graduation rates, and private investments through endowed chairs and professorships. In addition, state data shows a dramatic decline in the number of students requiring developmental education at Louisiana's four-year institutions.

"If you cut higher education, you are cutting economic and social development. You perpetuate greater dependence on government funded social services and deny people the opportunity to meet their full potential. If you don't fund education, you could turn potential doctors into janitors," Savoie said.

Legislators are currently attempting to craft a state budget that addresses the needs of the state during a time of budget shortfall. The only major areas unprotected in the state budget are health care and higher education. Savoie noted that health care is an important service, but one that is also dependent on an educated workforce.

"You can't address the health care problems of this state unless you have health care workers. You can't produce health care workers unless you fund colleges and universities. We ask that you allow us to work with you as you attempt to address both the health and educational needs of our state's

citizens.”

The budget requests presented by the Board of Regents include state support for pass through cost increases to fund group benefit insurance premiums, civil service merit pay raises, and risk management coverage. In addition, the budget includes \$15 million in funds to cover two-year campus enrollment growth and to provide financial assistance to the state’s four-year institutions as they implement new admissions standards.

“The viability of our institutions is dependent upon the significant support that you provide. Resources drive results,” Savoie explained, pointing out that significant achievements, like successful comprehensive education reform, don’t just happen; they are planned for and they are supported.

In addition to hearing from Savoie, two students addressed the Appropriations Committee in support of the quality efforts underway, Steven Sumbler, SGA president at Southern University and the student member on the Board of Regents and Stacy Cosby SGA President at Northwestern State University and Chair of the Council of Student Body Presidents.

“Louisiana has made great strides, however the students of this state need you to continue to provide the financial support that you have given us in the past,” Cosby said.

All public postsecondary education systems are scheduled to appear before the Appropriations Committee. Committee members began hearing from LSU today. They are scheduled to continue with LSU’s campuses and receive presentations from the Presidents of the Southern System, University of Louisiana System and Louisiana Community and Technical College System on April 28, 2003.